"BROOMS."

How She Treated Her Lover in His Misfortune.

BY LEON MEAD.

I SUPPOSE FOLKS think I am a-goin' for her money. Well, I don't care if they do. You see, George, it wasn't altogether my fault. She is one of them girls that is a stalwart in her likes and dislikes. She couldn't have been more than 22 years old when she first said that she liked me, and she stuck to it up to the minute I bid her goodby and started for Japan. What's a feller to do when a girl keeps tellin' him she's in love with him? Of course, I had to give in after awhile. I knew her father would fume over it and call me a rascal but, to tell the truth, I couldn't help likin' her, and I thought to myself if she liked me well enough to marry me it would not make so much difference what her governor said, anyway."

These remarks were made by Tom Abercorn on the deck of an American man-of-war anchored in an eastern port. We spent many afternoons, as old friends will, in reminiscent conversation. I had been cruising about the world nearly three years before it occurred to me that I was tired of it. A mere romantic caprice, considerably reinforced by Tom Abercorn's brusque persuasion, had led me into the service in the first place, and now that the glamor of marine experience had worn off I began to wonder whether I would not be happier on land.

There was some reason to believe that Tom was also growing dissatisfied, though he seldom hinted anything to that effect. He was a rough-and-ready fellow, and the life of the sea was more suited to his nature than to mine. While I was at college, breaking down a naturally delicate constitution by hard study, he was in a machine shop, developing an iron muscle that I had occasion to envy more than all the erudition I had acquired.

But while Tom was physically adapted to cope with ocean vicissitudes, there was a magnet that ever drew his thoughts ashore. He was engaged to be married. The father of his inamorata was a large and wealthy broom manufacturer in Philadelphia, and Tom always spoke facetiously of the young lady as Brooms. In fact, that was the nickname by which she was called by the members of her family and her most intimate friends.

THE ACCIDENT.

"But Mr. Grayling knows all about it now," continued Tom, after a pause. "Brooms told him. I fancy he would have been pretty mulish if he hadn't seen it was no use; so he says: 'Do you love him?' and Brooms replied: 'What do you take me for, papa—a hypocrite?' Then the old man says: 'All right, marry him.'"

Any further conversation was cut off by the gruff voice of the executive officer. The vessel was trespassing upon the channel, and the harbor master had sent an order for it to anchor farther out in the roadstead, so that it would not be an obstacle in the course which ships entering or leaving port were obliged to take.

Tom immediately went to his duties in the engine room, where he met with an accident that nearly cost him his life. At nearly the foot of the iron hatchway he slipped and fell, so that his left foot caught in a rapidly revolving crank. Before he could throw his arms over his shoulders and grasp an iron rod to extricate himself, his leg was horribly mangled just below the knee by another revolution of the crank. He fainted away before help could be summoned.

After Tom had been carried, unconscious, to the deck, I set about in the absence of the surgeon, who was ashore, to check the flow of blood from the wound by twisting a handkerchief around the upper part of his limb with a tourniquet. When the surgeon appeared on the scene he assured me that I had saved my friend's life; though the leg must be amputated at once, he declared as he gazed on the poor man groaning with agony.

And against all of Tom's protestations he was borne into a deck-pit and laid on a table. The surgeon insisted that there was not even time to administer ether. I have forgotten how many men were required to hold him. It was beyond my courage to stand by and

"HAIN'T SHE A DARLING?"

see them mutilate my comrade with all those knives and saws. Into his mouth they forced woolen cloth, to serve the double purpose of muffling his cries and furnishing him something to bite on.

At last it was over, and then they gave him opiates. From the time his wound was bandaged I became his nurse and watched over him through the long days and nights as though he were a brother. He grew so emaciated and weak that no one would have recognized him as the whilom strong, muscular Tom Abercorn. But he began to mend after a few weeks, though his convalescence was slow.

He grew nervously morbid, and frequently when reading to him I would look from my book and find him sobbing hysterically. I did not interrupt his grief, thinking that it was but the natural result of physical weakness. But one day when I was about to read to him his favorite poem, "The Lady of the Lake," he begged me to defer it. He was unusually pale and thoughtful on this occasion. On the previous night he had been in great pain, and exceedingly restless.

"George," said he, in a serious tone, "I am going to write Brooms that our engagement is off, and tell her why. I am only half a man now," and he made a droll feint of taking off his shoe from the foot that had been amputated. "If I was to insist on marryin' her she would be dreadfully disappointed, because Brooms is the proudest woman I ever did see. It would cut her to the quick to know that she had to be the wife of a one-legged man. I'm sure she would be too much ashamed to walk out with a husband who always had to carry a crutch. Yes, I'm going to give Brooms her freedom."

An interval of silence followed, and then I commenced to reason with him, but he shook his head stubbornly, and would not listen. He requested me to get pen and paper and write down his dictation. It was useless putting him off; he would call another shipmate if I refused, so I brought writing materials, propped him up on the pillows, and indited the following, substantially, as it came from his lips:

"MY DARLING BROOMS: I address you thus for the last time. I have met with an accident, and only have one leg left to meet another of like nature. I am very sorry for both our sakes that all this has happened, because through the loss of my limb I must lose you, for I know you have enough sense not to care for only half a man. Burn up my letters and picture. The latter, I believe, is full length, and no longer a correct likeness. Keep the parrot I brought you from the South seas by which to remember me as I once was when I could climb to the main top quicker than any jolly tar aboard the Natalie. I hope by the time I get back you'll be married and settled down, with a baby name I would insist upon you splitting it in two, just because—but never mind why. Brooms, you'll make some solid man the sweetest little wife on earth. There, good-by, Brooms! I could add to the brine of the old sea if I were leaning over the deck rail as it is I'm wasting a handkerchief, and my friend who writes this for me is a witness. Brooms, I'll never forget you, and am your friend always.

TOM."

Tom managed to scratch down his own signature. He requested me to mail the letter, and sinking back in the folds of the pillows exhausted, was soon in slumber.

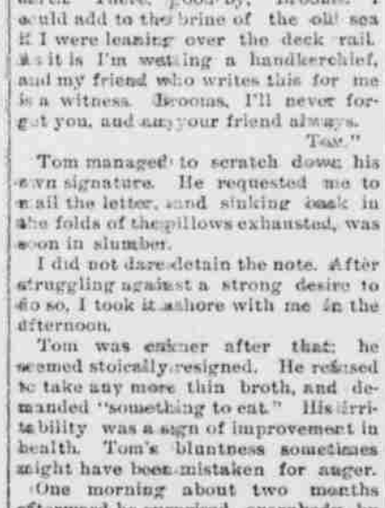
I did not dare detain the note. After struggling against a strong desire to do so, I took it ashore with me in the afternoon.

Tom was calmer after that; he seemed stoically resigned. He refused to take any more thin broth, and demanded "something to eat." His irritability was a sign of improvement in health. Tom's bluntness sometimes might have been mistaken for anger.

One morning about two months afterward he surprised everybody by calling for his clothes and the crutch that had been provided for him. Having been up in a chair several times, we assisted him into his clothes, and had the satisfaction of seeing him totter on deck.

That afternoon he received a letter from Brooms, and this is what it said:

"MY PRECIOUS OLD BOY—for you are precious now that there isn't so much left of you: I want you to distinctly understand that your relics belong to me. What there is of you I want, if it isn't more than a little finger. You needn't think I'm going to let you off, even if you do sacrifice a member in the hopes that I will. No, indeed! I am not that kind of a woman. Oh, Tom! I am so sorry that you have lost a leg. It will spoil our pleasure at dances, and you did used to enjoy waltzing so much; but I don't care if you will only come home



AS SHE STOOD UP WITH HIM.

and marry me. If you write such a letter as your last after you get this one I shall go stark mad and not try to recover. I think I shall be able to bring you under the domestic yoke, because you can not run away from me. I am going to let my finger nails grow, and get in training, as pugilistic parlance has it, for you. I do hope you've got about enough of the service to last you for life. Oh, dear Tom, won't you come back? I would love you just as much if both your legs were gone. Have you received the box of neckties, etc., yet?

"With undying, unaltering love, I am yours only, BROOMS."

I knew before Tom had finished perusing his letter by the joyful expression on his face that Brooms had not consented to the discontinuance of their relations. He sprang up, grasped his crutch, bade me follow him, and hobbled into a corner, where he read me Brooms' letter.

"Hain't she a darlin'?" he asked, carefully placing the message in his pocket.

Our vessel was a government cruiser, and had put into this port for repairs. When she was finally released from the dry dock the Natalie set out for New York, where in due course we arrived. Tom and myself were honorably discharged from the service and parted, he going to Philadelphia and I to Boston.

A few weeks later I received an invitation to Tom's wedding, and decided to attend it. The occasion was almost pathetic. The beauty of Brooms, upon which I had heard Tom dilate so often, was undeniable. As she stood up with him, her beryl-tinted eyes flashed with the fire of a woman's love, her cheeks suffused, her lips, like wet coral, murmuring the responses tremulously, the white serge all about her graceful throat, and the orange blossoms in her Titian hair, I must confess that for once the matter-of-fact Tom Abercorn excited my envy. And when it was all over and the guests' presents had been duly examined and admired, Brooms' father, with redundant graciousness, handed over a deed to an elegant brown-stone house, and told the bride and groom it was to be their future home. One of the guests informed me that Mr. Grayling had settled upon his daughter an annuity, and I came away fully convinced that I should be willing to spare one of my legs for such a wife and such a father-in-law.

Tom is at present a slap-up official in the Philadelphia navy yard. He don't half earn his handsome salary the rascal. There is scarcely anything for him to do. Tom is lazy, I fear; but then, he can afford to be; and Brooms, who is sole heir to her recently deceased father's estate, is constantly tensing him to resign, and let the old navy yard go to grass.

NO! NO! NO ROSES FOR that grave.
Nor hot-house blossoms gay!
No other flowers he cared for, save
The gentle wild ones, did my brave—
My boy who marched away.

A slender boy, with quiet eyes,
And blushes like a girl;
A lip that darkened downy-wise,
And taper hands a maid might prize,
And soft brown hair a-curl.

He loved to haunt the forest dells
Where shady ferns are best,
And fox-gloves with their dainty bells,
And where the timid violet tells
A fairy's lips have pressed.

But of them all he seemed to hold
The simple daisy queen:
And happiest, from a baby, rolled
Amid its foam of white and gold
On summer's waves of green.

And on that ever-echoing day
The little town and I
Saw our dear life-blood drawn away,
And eyes were set and lips were gray,
And trumpets blaring high.

I pinned above my boy's heart
The flower he loved the best,
And kissed him once and wrenched apart—
And looked again—and saw him start,
A soldier with the rest.

My country asked my all, and I—
I gave as mothers may.
The daisies withered with July:
And when the August fields were dry
They brought me back—some clay.

A stiff, soaked letter on its breast,
With crumbling petals in;
A brow that bore the kiss of rest;
And, lightly to its treasure pressed,
The fingers pale and thin.

At home I tend a shabby flower
That pined the winter through,
It seemed to shrink from hour to hour—
Perhaps, in place of Nature's shower,
It drank too bitter dew.

One little starving bloom it bore,
But timely did its part;
And while to-day the roses pour,
My boy shall have his own once more—
A daisy on his heart!

Uniform of Rags.

At the outbreak of the war between the states Capt. Reynolds raised a company of Mississippians, and in the enthusiasm of the occasion made some rash promises to the parents of the boys. Among these was one to keep his company well uniformey. Years passed, and one of the anxious fathers visiting the Army of Northern Virginia was mortified to see his boy in rags. He upbraided the coptain for not keeping his company in uniform. The captain for a moment was stunned, but recovered himself and cried out: "Attention, company! About face!" And as the unconfined rags fluttered like so many banners of poverty from each "Pope's headquarters" Captain R pointed to the company and said: "They are uniformed, sir."—Con. War Journal.

Mr. Thompson—I tell ye, dat Ed Flickers is a lazy nigger.

Mr. Utica Jones—Is dat so?

Mr. Thompson—Yan. Why, he's too lazy to shake when he's got de fever 'n-ager.—Judge.

The Household.

The Lad Went Down the Lane.

I tell you it's kind o' lonesome like
And somehow things git blue,
Whenever I set and watch the smoke
Go scamperin' up the flue.
It ain't the smoke that's botherin' me
But the pictors I see inside,
And many's the time I felt that bad
That I jest give up an' cried.
I know it's a purty spell for a man
That's used to trouble and pain,
But it's jest that way when I think of the day
That the lad went down the lane.

Now Jim was a boy as stiddy and true
As ever a son could be,
And I reckon he couldn't have been nohow
Much better to mother and me,
But somehow I didn't calculate
That Jim was only a boy
A hankerin' after a lot o' things
That I was too old to enjoy;
So I took the sunshine outen his life
And give him back nothin' but rain,
And it ain't much wonder, good as he was,
That the lad went down the lane.

Beyond the corn and the clover field
I can see him a trudgin' yet,
And remember the lump that filled my throat
And how mother's cheeks was wet.
Why I waited and listened many a night
To ketch the click of the gate,
For I 'lowed that Jim'd come back to us
If we'd only be patient an' wait;
But the weeks went by, and after awhile
It got to be sartin and plain
That it wan't no youngster playin' a prank
When the lad went down the lane.

I reckon there ain't on the earth to-day
A happier man than Jim,
A livin' down with them city folks,
Jest his wife and the babies and him,
And it's nice to have 'em comin' around;
But somehow it allus seems
The Jim I know ain't as close to me
As the Jim that comes in my dreams.
If I ever git holt of the time machine,
I'll yank her with might and main
'Way back to a couple of years before
The lad went down the lane.

J. H. Todd, in Farmers' Magazine.

What Life Is.

A little crib beside the bed,
A little face above the spread,
A little shoe upon the floor,
A little frock behind the door,
A little lad with dark brown hair,
A little blue-eyed face and fair,
A little lane that leads to school,
A little pencil, slate, and rule,
A little winsome, blithesome maid,
A little hand within his laid,
(That is where he got married.)
A little family gathering round
A little turf-heaped, tear-dewed mound.
(That is where the child died.)
A little cottage and acres four,
A little old-time-fashioned store,
A little added to his roll,
A little rest from hardest toil,
A little silver in his hair,
A little stool and an easy chair,
A little night of earth-lit gloom,
A little cortege to the tomb.
(That is what life is.)

Washing Blankets.

A sunny, windy day should be selected, and only one pair washed in one day. First put the blankets on the line and shake the dust out of them. Cut one pound of good soap in small pieces and boil in two quarts of water till dissolved. Add half a pound of powdered borax. Fill a tub about half full of water and add the soap and borax. Be sure to have the temperature of the water the same as that of the outside air. This is not a difficult matter, as town water is usually a little colder than the air in spring and summer, and only then should blankets be washed. Press the blankets down into the water and avoid rubbing; then let the soap and borax do the work—they certainly will. Let the blankets soak for two hours, then rinse them thoroughly in several waters until the rinsing water looks clear, taking care to have the rinsing water the same temperature as the first water and the outside air.

Then without wringing, put the blankets on the line. Do not stretch them, and be careful to hang them exactly even, then the color in the stripes will not run into the white. Although dripping wet, on a clear day they will dry in four or five hours and will be soft and clear. The wear, not the washing, will show to a certain extent, although they will look more like new ones than they did before washing. Take in when perfectly dry. They should not be ironed or pressed. They will be clean and will smell sweet. With set tubs the only hard work is to get the blankets on the line properly, and if some one will "lend a hand," even this is not very laborious.

DRESS OF SHORT WOMEN.—Women who are short must avoid much trimming on their skirts, be they stout or slender, as they are shorter in proportion from the waist to the feet, writes Emma M. Hooper, in an article on "Gowns for the New Year," in the Ladies' Home Journal. For the same reason they must omit wearing large plaids and designs. All full portions of the waist must be moderate in size, as the sleeves, bertha, belt and vest. The short, wide revers now worn are becoming, also round waists and short, pointed basques. Jacket fronts are in good taste, but the umbrella back basques give a short figure a cut off appearance, as do tiny capes, while a close-fitting jacket adds apparently several inches. Materials must be selected with a view to making the wearer look taller.—EX.

WESTERN CORN ROOT-WORM.—Is the larva of a small green beetle, a near relative of the striped squash and cucumber vine beetle. The eggs are laid about the roots of the corn in late summer and fall and hatch the following spring or early supper. If corn follows corn on the same ground year after year these worms will continue to increase and feed on the roots of the corn plants. The effect of these worms on the roots is to destroy them and thus wholly or in part destroy the crop. A rotation of crops from corn to any of the small grains or grasses is a perfect protection.

A country circus advertised that "at 12 o'clock the cannibals will be fed." A large crowd assembled, but to everybody's disappointment the savages ate potatoes. In reply to some indignant questions the manager said: "But, gentlemen, don't you see their diet is evidence of my skill? I have converted them into vegetarians."

The eminent surgeon, Sir Astley Cooper, was fond of a practical joke. On one occasion he ascended the church tower of a village in Norfolk, taking with him one of his mother's pillows, and finding the wind blew directly to the next town, he let off handfuls of feathers until he had emptied the pillow. The local papers reported this "remarkable shower" of feathers and offered various conjectures to account for it, and the account was copied into other papers, and was probably received as a perfectly natural occurrence.

Small Boy—How much will you give me if I hit you, pa? Fond Parent—What do you mean, my son? Small Boy—I heard ma tell sister that she struck you for $10 this morning.

A man may have a good deal of religion and yet not have Christ.